About the webinar

The link between alcohol and the environment is gaining attention as an area which requires further investigation. The environmental impacts of alcohol are observed across the entire production and consumption chain and include the depletion and degradation of water resources, greenhouse gas emissions, soil and air pollution and waste production (1). For example, the production of one litre of wine is estimated to require 870 litres of water (2), a demand which can stress the water supply for basic needs and agricultural purposes in affected areas. Food insecurity can also be exacerbated when the cultivation of crops such as hops, barley or grapes, required for the production of beer and wine, displaces the production of food crops (1).

Questions about the environmental footprint of alcohol arise at a time when approximately 2 billion people in the world lack access to safe drinking water (3), about 770 million people face hunger (4) and over 3 billion people are estimated to live in situations that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (5).

As the world faces the consequences of climate and environmental change, countries seek multi-sectoral, cost-effective solutions that preserve the natural systems that form the foundation of population health and well-being.

Alcohol consumption contributes to 3 million deaths each year globally (6) and affects social well-being and economic productivity (6). Given the wide range of health, social, economic and environmental consequences of alcohol, it is clear that alcohol undermines most aspects of the sustainable development agenda (7).

Effective alcohol control policies, therefore, have the potential to bring multiple health and environmental benefits. For example, if alcohol pricing included the cost of environmental externalities, it could reduce affordability, limit consumption and, in turn, minimize environmental damage. More work needs to be done, however, to understand the linkages between alcohol and the environment and how best to achieve coherent, integrated and multisectoral policy actions.

In this webinar, we will explore the current state of evidence and knowledge gaps on the relationship between alcohol and the environment. We will reflect on the global mechanisms that exist that could support countries in the implementation of coherent alcohol control and sustainability policies, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (8) and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (9). We will explore whether countries are leveraging these mechanisms to advance policy action and what are the potential barriers or pitfalls.

Importantly, we will discuss the next steps to advance alcohol control policies and actions that include environmental considerations.

What do we aim to achieve?

This webinar will raise awareness of the environmental impacts of alcohol, assess the available evidence, share examples of countries facing the environmental burden of alcohol production, and look at how alcohol control policies can incorporate environmental considerations and processes to catalyse action.

Who should participate?

The target audience includes policy-makers, government officials and civil servants, civil society, researchers, local authorities and the public.
Registration
Registration in advance is required to receive a direct link to the event. Please visit the webinar-specific registration link above for further details. Please contact us for more information on how to apply for consideration at: lessalcohol@who.int.

The event is organised by the Less Alcohol Unit of the Department of Health Promotion at the World Health Organization.

References


About the Less Alcohol Webinar Series
The Less Alcohol Webinar Series sets out to start global conversations on contemporary policy issues critical to reducing alcohol consumption. The topics explored through the series intend to draw attention to perceived blind spots in the policy sphere. For an overview of the 2023 edition of the webinar series, visit here and register for upcoming webinars below.

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